

TEACHER COLLEGIALITY AND ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT IN HIGH-ACHIEVING AND LOW-ACHIEVING SECONDARY SCHOOLS OF ISLAMABAD, PAKISTAN

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Abstract

This paper aims to identify the impact of teacher collegiality on organizational commitment among high-achieving and low-achieving public secondary school teachers in Islamabad, Pakistan. The present study is a descriptive (survey) study which is carried out on a sample of 364 public secondary school teachers from 17 schools including eight high-achieving (four male and four female) and nine low-achieving (four male and five female) secondary schools. The study uses Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with AMOS 16.0 to assess the impact of teacher collegiality on organizational commitment. It further uses multiple-group SEM analysis to determine if the impact of teacher collegiality on organizational commitment was equivalent across two groups (i.e., high-achieving school teachers versus low-achieving school teachers). The analysis confirms that teacher collegiality positively impact organizational commitment among secondary school teachers. The multi-group SEM analysis does not support for the moderating effects of school type based on achievement.

Keywords: Teacher Collegiality, Organizational Commitment, Secondary schools, Teachers, Pakistan

Introduction

Strong collegial relationships among school teachers have consistently been highlighted as an important factor for school improvement and success (Gossen & Anderson, 1995; Telford, 1996). Regrouping among teachers to promote collaboration in teaching and new configurations of teacher collegiality constitute integral parts of constructive schools (Johnson, 1990). The key to promoting change in schools is through the establishment of collaborative cultures based on the principles of collegiality, openness, and trust (Lieberman & Miller, 1990), for “schools cannot be improved without people working together” (Lieberman, 1986, p. 6). Therefore, educators are being encouraged to act as a team player in order to bring effective outcomes for students as well as for school organizations.

Similarly, organizational commitment has also been identified as a crucial factor in determining and influencing organizational outcomes. Higher organizational commitment among school staff influences the future success of education and schools (Huberman, 1993). Teacher commitment to school is thought to influence teachers’ work performance as well as student achievement (Firestone & Pennell, 1993; Reyes, 1990). Committed teachers are considered to have stronger psychological ties to their organizations (Firestone & Pennell, 1993).

Defining Teacher Collegiality

The term collegiality refers to the cooperative relationships among colleagues. However, the exact meaning of the term remains conceptually vague in the literature. Campbell and Southworth (1992) suggest that many people use the term as if it were commonly understood, but that understanding generally only means that teachers should 'work together'. Their review of collegiality concludes, "Collegiality is a hazy and imprecise notion" (Campbell & Southworth, 1992, p. 65). The term 'collegiality' is often used interchangeably with 'collaboration' in the literature. Jarzabkowski (2002), however, tries to differentiate between collegiality and collaboration by defining collegiality as to describe teachers' involvement with their peers on any level, be it intellectual, moral, political, social, and/or emotional. According to him, collegiality encompasses both professional and social/emotional interaction in the workplace while collaboration mostly relates to the professional sphere of relationships. Collaboration is an aspect of the more general concept of collegiality and implies actually working together on a joint project or toward a common goal. It is seen as a subset of collegiality (Jarzabkowski, 2002; Little, 1999).

For the purpose of this study, teacher collegiality is defined and conceptualized as the presence of the following seven specific teacher behaviours in schools: (a) Teachers in school *demonstrate mutual support and trust*. (b) Teachers in school *observe each other* engage in the practice of teaching. (c) Teachers in school engage together in *planning and assessing* their practices. (d) Teachers in school *share ideas and expertise* with each other. (e) Teachers in school *teach each other* the art of teaching and learning. (f) Teachers in school *develop curriculum* together. (g) Teachers in school *share resources* with each other like lesson plans, work sheets, and educational books etc.

Defining Organizational Commitment

Organizational commitment is a concept that seeks to capture the nature of the attachments formed by individuals to their employing organizations (Ketchand & Strawser, 2001). Most of the researchers agree that a consensus over the definition of organizational commitment has not yet been reached (Mowday, 1998; Suliman & Isles, 2000; Zangaro, 2001) and therefore, the literature is replete with a variety of definitions of organizational commitment. This may be because as Yoon and Thye (2002) state that it is a broad-ranging concept that goes across many organizational and sociological domains. However, the variety of definitions for organizational commitment with all its different measures share a common notion that organizational commitment is a bond of the individual to his/her organization (Camilleri, 2006). The accepted definitions of organizational commitment include an identity with the organization, shared goals and values between the individual and the organization, continuing membership in the organization and attachment to social relationships in the organization (Meyer & Allen, 1991; Mowday et al., 1982). Employees are regarded as committed to their organization if they willingly continue their association with the organization and devote considerable effort to attain the organizational goals (Mowday, 1998; Raju & Srivastava, 1994).

For the purpose of this study, organizational commitment as defined by Meyer and Allen (1991) is used as a framework in the data collection process and data analysis. Meyer and Allen (1991) defined organizational commitment as the presence of three major components:

- Affective organizational commitment: refers to an individual's attachment to, identification with, and involvement within the respective organization.
- Continuance organizational commitment: refers to an awareness of the costs associated with leaving the organization.

- Normative organizational commitment: refers to a feeling of obligation to continue membership with the organization.

Literature Review

Traditionally, schools have been isolating places for teachers to work in where they often feel separated from each other, seldom engaging with their peers in conversation, professional sharing, or problem-solving (Little, 1982). Despite the recognized value of strong collegial relationships, it is still not a common practice among educators. Teachers' extreme busy schedules, course loads, and additional managerial duties make it difficult for them to make the time to talk or work together. Teachers need opportunities to collegiate with each other to best serve their students, to make their work more meaningful, and to transform schooling in a way that keeps it vibrant and relevant (Dillon, 2003).

The conception that educators perform better when they work together professionally is buoyed by elements of organizational theory models which emerged earlier in the corporate sector (see e.g. Covey, 1991; Lawler, 1986; Senge, 1990). Such conceptions view authentic teamwork as being an essential characteristic of the successful organization as its members come together regularly to share their ideas and expertise and develop common understanding of organizational goals and the means to their attainment (Leonard & Leonard, 2003).

Work of Little (1982), added to the concept of 'collegiality' and 'norms of collegiality', and concluded that "in successful and effective schools, teachers value and participate in norms of collegiality and continuous improvement; and they persuade a greater range of professional interactions with fellow teachers and administrators, including talk about instruction, structured observation, and shared planning or preparation" (Little, 1982, p. 325).

Employees' commitment to the workplace, on the other hand, is also considered as a hallmark of organizational success. The concept of organizational commitment started its formation in the early 1950s. Most of the earlier research on organizational commitment was focused on defining the concept, identifying the factors that caused its formation among individuals and how it influenced organizational consequences after being formed. However, the recent research in the organizational psychology and organizational behaviour literature has examined organizational commitment through two popular approaches, commitment-related attitudes and commitment-related behaviours. The current research on organizational commitment is more focused on identifying the existence of its multiple dimensions and finding the relationships of these dimensions and sub-dimensions with important antecedents, correlates, and consequences.

Impact of Teacher Collegiality on Teacher Organizational Commitment

The literature on teacher culture identified organizational commitment as an important variable that is most frequently influenced by the variations in the levels of collegiality among teaching staff members. Many studies have indicated that in schools where teachers work together to plan school improvement, select instructional methods and activities, and plan teacher professional development and training, teachers tend to be more committed to their organization (Barth, 1990; Graham, 1996; Mutchler, 2005; Reyes, 1992). Hargreaves (1997) also supports the view that collegiality among teaching personnel helps them to better develop higher commitment levels. Reyes (1992) also believes that teachers tend to be more committed to their schools when social interactions among them are highly collegial. Teachers' relationships with their colleagues seem to be the most

influential factor in teachers' willingness to remain committed to a specific school organization (Mutchler, 2005). Organizational commitment can be nurtured and developed in a collegial school culture (Troncoso-Skidmore, 2007).

Problem Statement

Although the concept of teacher collegiality has gained a lot of attention by the educational scholars and researchers in the recent years but still there is a paucity of research on this particular topic in the Pakistani context. The literature review shows that most of the studies on teacher collegiality are conducted in the United States and Australia. The findings of these studies cannot be generalized to the Pakistan's situation, neither their implications could be drawn on Pakistan's educational institutions because of the entirely different cultural and educational contexts. Healthy collegial relationship among teachers is a least discussed topic among Pakistani educational researchers.

The current research is apparently the first attempt to study teacher collegiality and its impact on teacher organizational commitment in the Pakistani context. Therefore, the findings of this study could provide some evidence and empirical data for future research. If the central hypothesis of the study would be supported, school administrators, educators, and policy makers might begin to attach more significance to teacher interpersonal relationships and regard it as an alterable variable highly affecting teacher commitment levels.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the current study is to identify the impact of teacher collegiality on teacher organizational commitment among high-achieving and low-achieving public secondary schools of Islamabad, Pakistan. It further examines if the impact of teacher collegiality on teacher organizational commitment is equivalent across the two groups (i.e., high-achieving school teachers versus low-achieving school teachers).

Methodology

This study is a quantitative, non-experimental study where survey is the major source of data collection. Both male and female teachers of public secondary schools from across Islamabad served as research sample. The survey was conducted at 17 public secondary schools including eight high-achieving (four male and four female) and nine low-achieving (four male and five female) schools. These schools were selected on the basis of their students' academic results on the Federal Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education (FBISE) examination for two concurrent school years i.e., 2008 and 2009. Schools were visited personally. All the teaching staff which constituted of 445 teachers was requested to fill-up the questionnaire. A total of 364 teachers returned the survey making the response rate of 81.79%.

Teacher collegiality was measured using a self-developed Teacher Collegiality Scale (TCS) consisting of 32-items. TCS addresses seven interpretable and internally consistent dimensions with subscales' internal consistency ranging from .70 to .85. Organizational commitment was measured using 18-item TCM Employee Commitment Survey (Meyer, Allen, & Smith, 1993) scale which is the revised version of Meyer and Allen (1991) Organizational Commitment Questionnaire. This scale measures three forms of employee commitment to an organization (affective, continuance, and

normative commitment). The reliability for this scale ranged from .82 to .88. A Likert scale ranges from 1 to 7 (1 = strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree) was used for both the measures.

Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) using AMOS 16.0 was used to analyze the impact of teacher collegiality on teacher organizational commitment. Multiple-group SEM analysis was performed to determine if school type based on achievement (i.e., high-achieving schools versus low-achieving schools) functioned as moderator for the impact of teacher collegiality on teacher organizational commitment.

Results

Data was analyzed using descriptive as well as inferential statistics. However, before conducting inferential analysis, data was screened initially using SPSS 17.0 to check for the presence of any incorrectly entered data as well as missing values. This study uses SEM which requires complete data set. Therefore, the replacement of the missing data with appropriate values was significant before conducting any inferential analysis. The Expectation Maximization (EM) imputation method was chosen for the replacement of missing data. Data was also examined for univariate and multivariate normality and the presence of outliers. The reliability analysis was conducted for both the measures.

Demographic Information of the Respondents

The descriptive analysis revealed that almost half of the participants were male (49.2%) and half were female (50.8%). A total of 196 respondents (84 male and 112 female) taught in high-achieving schools and 168 (95 male and 73 female) taught in low-achieving schools. Nearly 31% of the staff had the teaching experience of 5-10 years and 26% were teaching for 10-15 years. Only 8.2% had been teaching for more than 20 years. More than half of the teachers (54.7%) were master's degree holders. Only 14.6% were either MPhil degree holder or PhD holder. However, it was noted that one third of higher degree holders (64.2%) were teaching in high-achieving schools and only 35.8% were teaching in low-achieving schools.

Descriptive Statistics

The descriptive analysis was performed using means and standard deviations. Teachers' perceptions about Teacher Collegiality subscales were found to be different in both types of schools, mostly on the higher side for two subscales namely *Demonstrating Mutual Support and Trust* and *Sharing Ideas and Expertise*. While on the other hand, lowest mean values were found for *Observing one another Teaching* subscale.

Organizational commitment was found to be low among public secondary school teachers in Pakistan. Among the three components of organizational commitment, *Continuance Organizational Commitment* showed the highest mean values indicating that teachers in Pakistan are more aware of the costs associated with leaving the organization might be due to the limited alternatives and opportunities.

Results for SEM Analysis

In SEM analysis, measurement model is tested initially to assess whether observed indicators are loaded on hypothesized latent variables using CFA, which then serves as input to estimate the structural coefficients between constructs or latent variables. A structural model determines if data

fits the hypothesized model showing the impact of teacher collegiality on teacher organizational commitment.

For the current analysis, CFA results showed some indicators with a low factor loading (less than 0.4), therefore, they were removed initially and then the goodness-of-fit (GOF) index was checked to verify each latent construct. Some modifications were carried out during CFA as the fit for measurement model was found to be less than adequate. Changes based on the modification indices and standardized residual covariances were made to increase GOF in order to get the acceptable fit. The modified measurement model yielded an overall χ^2 value of 1998.21, $p < .001$ with CFI = .910, TLI = .906, and RMSEA = .045, RMR = .049; the χ^2/df was 1.72.

The structural model was developed by replacing the correlational path between the two measures by single-headed arrow indicating the impact of teacher collegiality on organizational commitment. An additional residual error was added to the dependent variable (i.e., organizational commitment) in the structural model. The fit for structural model was appropriate indicating that the data represent the hypothesized model. The χ^2 value for the structural model was 1998.21 with $p = .000$. The other fit indices show that structural model fitted the current data well (CFI = .907, TLI = .902, and RMSEA = .043, RMR = .048; the χ^2/df was 1.71).

The structural path (Organizational Commitment \leftarrow Teacher Collegiality), was estimated to be .81 indicating a strong positive impact. The analysis indicated that in Pakistani secondary schools, teachers' perceptions about collegiality influence their organizational commitment levels.

Multiple-group SEM Results

Multiple-group SEM analysis was performed to determine if school type based on achievement (i.e., high-achieving school versus low-achieving school) functioned as moderator for the impact of teacher collegiality on teacher organizational commitment.

As the overall model was complicated and required large sample size, dividing the sample into two groups (i.e., high-achieving school teachers and low-achieving school teachers) could make it difficult to conduct the multi-group SEM analysis. Therefore, the model was summarized by computing all the observed variables/indicators to their respective factors as the measurement model had already been validated by the CFA. In this case, the new model was reduced from second-order factor model to first-order factor model where the seven factors of Teacher Collegiality and three factors of Organizational Commitment turned to be the observed variables while Teacher Collegiality and Organizational Commitment were the first-order latent variables.

Both the groups were tested separately to check for the adequate model fit. The satisfactory results for each group allowed for the multi-group analysis. Test for multi-group invariance requires that the same number of factors and the factor-loading pattern be the same across groups. No equality constraints were imposed initially on any of the parameters. Thus, the same parameters that were estimated in the baseline model for each group separately were again estimated in this multi-group model where it incorporates the baseline models for high-achieving and low-achieving school teachers within the same file. This model is commonly termed as configural model or totally free multiple-group model (TF). This multi-group model not only allows for invariance tests to be conducted across the two groups simultaneously but the fit of this configural model also provides the baseline value against which all subsequently specified invariance models are compared. Chi-square value equal to 180.54 with 68 degrees of freedom and p -value was statistically significant ($p <$

.001). GOF indices indicated a good model fit with CFI = .935; TLI = .914; RMSEA = .068, and RMR = .028.

The measurement invariance was estimated before testing structural invariance. Measurement invariance assures if the measurement models conducted under different conditions yield equivalent representations of the same construct. As the full measurement invariance is difficult to achieve for complex models (Hair, et al., 2006), the partial measurement invariance was performed keeping at least two parameters per construct. The new model with measurement weights constrained revealed χ^2 value of 189.04 with degrees of freedom equal to 72. GOF results from the test of invariant measurement weights provided evidence of a well-fitting model (χ^2 (72) = 189.04, $p < .001$; CFI = .932; TLI = .915; RMSEA = .067). The difference in χ^2 from the configural model was statistically non-significant ($\Delta\chi^2$ (4) = 8.503). The difference between the CFI values (ΔCFI = .003) was also found to be less than the recommended cutoff criterion of .01 as proposed by Cheung and Rensvold (2002) which further supports that the measurement model is invariant across the two groups. It was therefore, concluded that the measurement weights operate similarly across high-achieving and low-achieving school teachers.

Once the partial measurement invariance was achieved, the structural invariance was tested. Chi-square value for the structural model was χ^2 (73) = 189.12 and the $\Delta\chi^2$ (5) = 8.58. The $\Delta\chi^2$ statistics did not reveal a significant difference between the two models. Similarly, ΔCFI was equal to .002, also showing the non-significant difference. Both the tests revealed that the two models did not support the hypothesis of differences in the path estimates. This result suggested that school type based on achievement did not moderate the impact of teacher collegiality on organizational commitment among public secondary school teachers in Pakistan. The impact of teacher collegiality on teacher organizational commitment was similar across high-achieving and low-achieving schools.

Discussion and Conclusion

The consistent argument in the literature about the contributions of teacher collegiality for augmenting teachers' commitment toward their organization was strongly supported by this study. The theories that supported the positive impact of teacher collegiality on teacher organizational commitment (Graham, 1996; Mutchler, 2005; Reyes, 1992) were verified. The results indicated that teachers who perceived higher level of collegiality in their schools were most likely to be organizationally committed. This impact was found to be similar across both types of schools (i.e., high-achieving and low-achieving schools).

In short, a strong positive impact of teacher collegiality on organizational commitment among school teachers shows a need for focusing on this aspect if teachers are desired to remain highly committed to their school organization not only in Pakistan but in any other developing country.

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